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Frank G. Wisner

Frank G. Wisner is dead in Washington, D. C. There has passed the greatest cold war soldier in American history.

Fittingly, Wisner's death went unreported by the wire services. The things he did made headlines. But he would have counted his accomplishments as failures—indeed they would have been failures — had any newspaperman been able to connect man and deed.

It was Wisner who set up America's clandestine radio stations; Wisner who arranged for the uprising in Guatemala; Wisner who kept in touch with the dissident Poles, the dissident East Germans; Wisner who planned the defection of Russian agents; Wisner who answered "yes" or "no" when the National Security Council under Presidents Truman and Eisenhower asked whether the clandestine services could do the job.

Frank Wisner never got to be the Director of Central Intelligence, probably to his vast disappointment. He would have liked to come up for fresh air and public recognition. Any man would. But he was three times passed over in favor of public figures. Each morning on the way to his drab rabbit warren offices, he pretended to the world that he was a liaison officer between the State Department and the CIA.

There he ran the clandestine services of his government, his keen mind ranging over a world wide network which had its daily successes and failures, its daily threats of explosion, its constant dangers from exposure at home and abroad. Wisner was the man who knew each agent, knew each mission, knew who was dead, who was "blown," who had his hand in the till, who was good and who was tired.

Eventually, he wore himself out. The size of the job, the hours, the complexity, the harrying and the danger got to his mind. Frank Wisner had a nervous breakdown during the Hungarian uprising of 1956.

Generals too are wounded in battle but they retire with medals and public honor. Wisner left his job as quietly and as secretly as he had worked at it. Only the small group of friends around him whose common attribute was "the need to know" saluted him then, and salute him now.

President Kennedy once said of the agents of the CIA, "Your successes are un-

He might have been speaking of Frank Wisner, leader of them all.

CPYRGHT.